

THE BIRDS OUGHT TO KNOW

By T. TAKASAKI

Mr. Takasaki, President of the Mangyo concern, is not only the leading industrialist of Manchoukuo but also a keen observer of animal life and an original thinker. I discovered this during my recent visit to Hsinking, when Mr. Takasaki discussed, apart from economic and political topics, the subject of the following article with me.—K.M.

IN spring and summer there are many migratory birds, such as the swallow, to be seen in Japan. There they find the beautiful blossoms and innumerable insects which amply provide them with food. There they set about industriously founding their peaceful families. But when their young ones are fledged and summer nears its end, they fly off to the south, to South China, French Indo-China, Thailand, Malai, the Philippines, Borneo, Djawa, and Australia, in other words to the tropic zone and the South Seas. There they spend the winter. With spring they return to Japan, and year after year they repeat this life of migration.

In the north is also to be found the summer habitat of many other migratory birds, for example the wild goose and wild duck. These birds spend the summer in Manchuria, Mongolia, Kamtchatka, the whole of eastern Siberia east of the Yenissei River (east of 90° eastern longitude), and part of Alaska. During the summer these areas are in full bloom. The birds of passage live there undisturbed and without danger; indeed, it is a paradise for them. With the approach of autumn, however, when the cold storms begin, they too start out on their journey for the south. For during the winter months these northern regions are cloaked in darkness and covered with snow and ice.

* * *

Although the research work carried out by numerous zoologists has disclosed

many details about the nature of migratory birds, such as the theory of natural selection, the theory of heredity, and the physiological urge, we still do not know how migratory birds have come to be. All we can say is that it was neither Anglo-American influence nor Jewish pressure which made them what they are. It is a strange, incomprehensible phenomenon that, at every turn of the season, every year, the migratory birds undertake their flight to change their habitats. But even if we cannot explain it, we can still establish the following three facts about their habits:

(1) Migratory birds which live around Japan lead their lives of migration from the North Pole to the South Sea area between 90 and 180 degrees eastern longitude.

(2) The actual habitat of the birds is the northern part of the globe, and the summer there is very suited to their

life and propagation.

(3) Although the flight of the birds represents hard work and is a matter of life and death demanding untold privation, they make this long, arduous journey every year.

In order to follow their urge of migration, these birds must make great sacrifices, since many of them perish on the way in storms and others fall prey to wild eagles and hawks. They are persecuted especially by an intelligent animal—Man, who sets traps for them. It is impossible to imagine the extent of their



courage, which allows them to carry out their flights in spite of all such difficulties.

A study of the migratory birds found around Japan has shown that with every brood they produce four or five young ones, in order to have a large progeny and thus replace possible losses in young ones. In one summer they lay eggs three times, while nonmigratory birds living in the tropics produce an average of two or three young ones, and that only once a year. In Japan the swallow raises an average of seven young ones during one summer. When the swallows born in Japan this year return there next year, nearly eighty per cent of them will have perished. In spite of such tremendous sacrifices, the birds of passage never shrink from their migratory flights.

A study of the history of the living creatures of the earth shows us that, speaking in terms of geological periods, the species of birds followed the species of reptiles and developed side by side with it during the Mesozoic period. It is assumed that this happened 130 million years ago.

The birds of that time were certainly different from those of today; in their shape they resembled reptiles, but with wings. Birds as we know them now originated at the beginning of the Tertiary period, that is, some 50 million years ago. Since that time, birds developed by constant adaptation to the vicissitudes of environment. In the course of this, the migratory habits of some birds were probably developed with which they surmounted difficulties and natural obstacles such as we can hardly imagine today.

These migratory birds must indeed possess great experience, naturally gained by living through so long a period as 130 million years.

* * *

The Japanese people which, for 2,500 years since the foundation of its empire, was never able to rid itself of the limited conception that its own little country was the sole sphere of life in which it could be active, is only now beginning to grasp the fact that the time has come to form the Greater East Asia Sphere into a zone in which the peoples of East Asia are to live together with Japan.

We should deeply inscribe in our souls the following facts given us by these wonderful birds of passage themselves which have an unbroken chain of experiences by which they have harmed nobody. What are these facts indicated to us by migratory birds?

(1) Within the space of a quarter of the surface of the earth, between 90 and 180 degrees eastern longitude and from the North Pole to the South Pole, the Japanese people should set about founding a paradise for all peoples of this area.

(2) There is no doubt that it is in the northern regions of the earth that a people must live which is to have the honor of leading all other peoples in the above-mentioned space. The North produces men—the South produces material.

(3) Only those who have survived the bitter struggle for life and death can fulfill the great task of founding the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. May this sacred struggle of our days be fought to its successful end.

